

men or lesbians. Until one does, there is absolutely no need for Congress to consider whether other States are, or should be, obligated to recognize such marriages.

Second, it is clear to me that this legislation is politically motivated. By making this unnecessary bill a priority of this Congress, while failing to act on numerous other measures of much more immediate importance, the Republican leadership has made clear its desire to try to embarrass those who have traditionally supported equal rights for all Americans, including gays and lesbians.

Third, I do not believe that most Rhode Islanders or most Americans think that this a matter of urgent national importance requiring congressional action. Prior to the introduction of this legislation, I had not received one letter or phone call expressing concern about gay or lesbian marriages. And since the introduction of this legislation, I have received only limited correspondence from Rhode Islanders expressing support for it. Whoever has this bill high on their agenda has not consulted with many of my constituents or with many of the people from across the Nation who write to me.

Mr. President, I know that people of good will and strong faith can differ on this sensitive subject. And I knew that the Senate's vote would be a lopsided one. But if we truly believe in family values, we should remember that the gay men and lesbians whom this legislation will affect are our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, our friends and colleagues. Before we enact legislation that further isolates them from the mainstream of society, we should consider carefully whether this legislation is needed, desired, or desirable. I do not believe that it is.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, September 13, the Federal debt stood at \$5,217,304,758,895.91.

One year ago, September 13, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,967,411,000,000.

Five years ago, September 13, 1991, the Federal debt stood at \$3,623,683,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago, September 13, 1971, the Federal debt stood at \$416,135,000,000. This reflects an increase of more than \$4 trillion during the 25 years from 1971 to 1996.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3662) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, if the managers would agree, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the committee amendment to offer an amendment at this point. And perhaps it could be dealt with later, if the managers of the bill would agree. It is an amendment that addresses concerns confronting cattle producers in the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 5351

(Purpose: To promote the livestock industry)

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. PRESSLER] proposes an amendment numbered 5351.

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President this amendment attempts to address many of the concerns confronting cattle producers in the United States today. The issues of packer concentration, lack of price discovery, retail price spreads and low prices have been foremost on the minds of cattle producers and consumers throughout South Dakota and the Nation.

To say these are concerns of my fellow South Dakotans is a gross understatement. Thousands of South Dakotans have written, called, or visited with me on this issue. This is an issue that strikes at the heart of their ability to run their farms and businesses and provide for their families. The time has come for Congress to take action.

For the past 2 years, I have been pressing the Clinton administration to address meatpacker concentration and utilize existing antitrust laws to make sure that cattle are sold in an open and competitive market. Though the administration has taken some steps over the past several months, I believe these measures are marginal at best. Stronger action is needed.

What is of great concern to producers is the fact that while cattle prices have been at or near record lows, retail prices have not shown any significant drop. In fact, just the opposite is happening.

In 1995, at Eich's Meat Market, in Salem, SD, the price of a choice yield grade 2 hind quarter was \$1.65 per pound—that is the highest price paid at this locker since it was opened. This past summer it was \$1.60 per pound. The same hind quarter was selling for \$1.57 per pound in 1993. In contrast, in 1993 live cattle prices were \$80 or higher. Yet, in 1995, live prices have been as low as \$51.50.

This represents a combination punch to South Dakota ranchers—as producers, they are getting fewer dollars for their livestock; yet, as consumers, ranchers—armed with fewer dollars—are forced to pay more both in terms of real dollars and as a portion of their budget to put their own product on the dinner table.

The influence of packer concentration on the market cannot be overlooked or dismissed. Fifteen years ago, the top four packers held about 40 percent of the market. Today market share is over 85 percent.

Economic studies have shown that this kind of market concentration provides these firms with the kind of power needed to control prices.

At a recent Senate Commerce Committee hearing that I chaired on this subject, it was made abundantly clear that all too often cattle producers do not have free, open, or competitive markets in which to sell their cattle. The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, [GIPSA] is charged with insuring a free and open marketplace. GIPSA must be more vigilant in assuring this.

Only through enforcement of existing antitrust will we be able to ensure the long-term economic viability of the U.S. cattle industry. South Dakota ranchers agree.

I have held two Senate hearings on this subject over the past year. I also have introduced several bills to address concerns that cattle producers have told me must be addressed. Other Senators have offered their own proposals. Some are controversial. What I have done with this amendment is incorporate those measures that I believe we can pass this year. Our cattlemen need relief now, not a promise of future action at some point next year.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a summary of my amendment be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. PRESSLER. I do not believe this is a partisan issue. Nor should this amendment be treated as one. Both Republicans and Democrats from cattle-producing States I expect will embrace this amendment. Some may say tougher action is needed. They're right. The goal here is to do what we can now. This amendment I believe is a strong step in the right direction.

Again, while my amendment does not include everything I think is needed I believe it is a measure that can pass

and provide real teeth to bring real results to the problems that our cattle producers face.

We need to keep in mind that old saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well the U.S. cattle industry is broke and it needs fixing, now.

I would like to commend the South Dakota secretary of agriculture, Dean Anderson, for being a national leader on this issue. Secretary Anderson was responsible for bringing this matter before the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. South Dakota livestock producers are proud of Secretary Anderson's efforts, as I am. As all South Dakotans know Secretary Anderson recently announced his retirement. He will be missed. His efforts to raise this issue to the national level will be a legacy that South Dakota cattle producers will long remember and be proud of. Passing the amendment I have offered would demonstrate that Congress has listened to Secretary Anderson.

The Senate needs to carefully review this amendment and other possible amendments that address issues confronting the U.S. cattle industry. Packer concentration, price manipulation, possible price fixing, and captive supply all must be looked at and a definite course of action implemented. I will withhold a detailed discussion of this amendment at this time. I offered the amendment to give my colleagues a chance to review it. I expect others may want to seek amendments to this proposal. I welcome any suggestions from all my colleagues. The goal, again, is to do the right thing for our cattlemen, and to do it as soon as possible.

So, Mr. President, in conclusion, let me ask my colleagues to take a look at this amendment, to make their suggestions. Our agricultural industry in the United States is in pretty good shape at this moment except for our cattlemen. We need to take a number of steps. We need to work on packer concentration. We need to get more of our beef into Japan, and some of those countries, and China. We need to get some of the tariffs lowered in some of the Asian countries on beef. We also need to take some steps domestically to be sure that we do not overlook the plight of our cattlemen at this time.

Mr. President, I offer this amendment and I ask that my colleagues consider it and that we take what action we can to help our cattlemen in the closing days of this Congress. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

PRESSLER LIVESTOCK AMENDMENT

Section 1. Captive Supply:

This section (from S. 1939) addresses producers' concern of captive supplies. A better definition of captive supply and more information regarding captive supplies will bring greater price discovery to producers.

The Packers and Stockyards Act would be amended by defining "captive supply" as livestock acquired by packers delivered 7 or more days before slaughter under a standing purchase agreement, forward contract, or packer ownership, feeding or financing.

This section also requires and annual report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the number and volume of U.S. livestock marketed or slaughtered. This report must include information on transactions involving livestock in regional and local markets. The confidentiality of individual livestock transactions would be maintained.

Finally, this section would require the Secretary of Agriculture to make available within 24 hours information received concerning captive supply transactions.

Section 2. Livestock Dealer Trust:

This section (S. 1707, revised) would establish a Livestock Dealer Trust. This provision was part of the Senate-passed version of the new Farm Bill, but was dropped in conference.

The section amends the Packers and Stockyards Act and establishes a statutory trust for the benefit of livestock sellers who sell to livestock dealers and market agencies that buy on commission. To ensure prompt payment of livestock sellers, all livestock purchased in cash sales by a dealer or market agency buying livestock on commission shall have all related property (i.e. livestock, receivables or proceeds) held in a "floating" trust until the unpaid seller receives full payment.

Section 3. Cooperative Bargaining:

This section (from S. 1939) ensures that producer cooperatives are fairly treated by handlers of agricultural products. The Agricultural Fair Practices Act of 1967 would be amended to make it unlawful for handlers of agricultural products to fail to engage in good-faith negotiations with producer cooperatives. It would also make it unlawful to unfairly discriminate among producer cooperatives with respect to the purchase, acquisition, or other handling of agricultural products.

Section 4. Labeling of Meat and Meat Food Products:

This section (from S. 1939) would require country of origin labels on graded meats. Producers and consumers alike have made it abundantly clear that meat needs to be labeled to show country of origin. Under this section, the Federal Meat Inspection Act would be amended to require graded meat that was either imported, or produced from an animal that was located outside the United States for at least 120 days, be labeled showing the country of origin.

Section 5. Interstate Shipment of Meat and Poultry Products:

This section (S. 1862) would permit the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry products. The section would amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act to allow states to apply to the Secretary of Agriculture for the interstate shipment of meat and poultry products. The Secretary of Agriculture first must verify that the state's mandatory inspection requirements are equal to or greater than the Federal inspection, reinspection and sanitation requirements.

Upon verification by the Secretary, the prohibition on interstate shipment of meat and poultry products inspected solely by the state shall be waived. Once a waiver has been granted, the Secretary of Agriculture may perform random inspections of state-inspected plants to ensure that mandatory state inspection requirements are equal to or greater than Federal requirements. If a state does not maintain its inspection requirements to Federal levels, the Secretary shall reimpose the restriction against the interstate distribution of meat and poultry products.

This section was recommended by members of USDA's packer concentration com-

mission and is strongly supported in the agricultural community. Lifting the market restrictions imposed on state-inspected meat and poultry processors would slow the concentration in meat packing by enabling small- and mid-size processors to expand their operations and create more jobs. 400 state-inspected plants have gone out of business since 1993 because of the prohibition. This section would provide the same opportunity for small business owners and operators that exists for large corporations and foreign competitors.

Section 6. Review of Federal Agriculture Credit Policies:

This section (from S. 1949) establishes an interagency working group to study the extent that Federal lending practices have contributed to concentration in the livestock and dairy markets. This interagency working group would be established by the Secretary of Agriculture after consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Chairman of the Board of the Farm Credit Administration.

Section 7. International Barriers to Trade:

This section (from S. Res. 277) expresses the Sense of the Senate that certain actions be taken to address international barriers to trade. Those actions are as follows:

(1) the Secretary of Agriculture should continue to identify and seek to eliminate unfair trade barriers and subsidies that affect U.S. beef markets;

(2) the U.S. and Canada should expeditiously negotiate the elimination of animal health barriers that are not based on sound science. Many U.S. cattle producers are concerned that Canada requires more stringent veterinary and inspection requirements on U.S. cattle entering their market than what the U.S. requires on Canadian cattle entering our market;

(3) the import ban on beef from cattle treated with approved growth hormones imposed by the European Union should be terminated. The European Union's ban on U.S. cattle and beef is not scientifically based, represents an unreasonable barrier to U.S. trade, and has cost U.S. beef producers more than \$1 billion in export sales since 1989; and

(4) the Secretary of Agriculture should use the Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM-102) and the Intermediate Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM-103) to promote the export of U.S. agricultural commodities to countries of Africa.

Section 8. Animal Drug Availability Act:

This section (S. 773, revised) contains the Animal Drug Availability Act of 1996. The Act contains recommended changes to new animal drug application approvals to provide the Food and Drug Administration with greater flexibility to determine when animal drugs are effective for their intended uses. The Act would establish streamlined approval requirements for new individual animal drugs or active ingredients sought to be used in combination. Currently separate tests are required for approval of these drugs.

This section also would require the Food and Drug Administration to consider legislative and regulatory options for facilitating approvals of animal drugs for minor species and minor uses, and to announce its proposals for legislative or regulatory changes within 18 months of the date of enactment. Currently, the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act does not address animal drug approvals for minor species or uses.

Mr. GORTON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we, of course, will take a careful look at this

amendment. It is on a subject of which this Senator is well aware, as a member of the Commerce Committee, of which the Senator from South Dakota is chairman. It does address a very real need. On the other hand, Mr. President, it obviously has nothing to do with an appropriations bill for the Department of Interior and related agencies.

The distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia and I have, as a policy, determined that we will not be friendly toward amendments which are entirely nongermane or entirely nonrelevant to issues before this bill. If we do, if amendments like this begin to pass, it is almost certain that the bill itself will be taken down. The sponsors of the amendments likely will not be successful in reaching their policy goals, and we will have frustrated the appropriations process.

So I express the hope, and subject to what I hear from the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, that the Senator from South Dakota will be able to make a very important point, as he has, and as he has done eloquently, without opening up this bill in a way that has frustrated and perhaps destroyed some other appropriations bills, including the one that preceded this as a matter of debate. With that, as we do not have any votes to take place today, I suggest that we set the amendment aside and move forward to another subject.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to lay aside the pending amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending amendment has just been laid aside.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to lay aside the pending committee amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

AMENDMENT NO. 5352

(Purpose: To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into cooperative agreements for the restoration and enhancement of biotic resources on watershed land)

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk involving a voluntary watershed restoration effort on private lands. I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN] proposes an amendment numbered 5352.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place in title I, insert the following:

SEC. 1. WATERSHED RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal year 1997 and each fiscal year thereafter, appropriations made for the Bureau of Land Management may be used by the Secretary of the Interior for the purpose of entering into cooperative agreements with willing private landowners for restoration and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and other biotic resources on public or private land or both that benefit these resources on public lands within the watershed.

(b) DIRECT AND INDIRECT WATERSHED AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary of the Interior may enter into a watershed restoration and enhancement agreement—

(1) direct with a willing private landowner; or

(2) indirectly through an agreement with a State, local, or tribal government or other public entity, educational institution, or private nonprofit organization.

(c) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—In order for the Secretary to enter into a watershed restoration and enhancement agreement—

(1) the agreement shall—

(A) include such terms and conditions mutually agreed to by the Secretary and the landowner;

(B) improve the viability of and otherwise benefit the fish, wildlife, and other biotic resources on public land in the watershed;

(C) authorize the provision of technical assistance by the Secretary in the planning of management activities that will further the purposes of the agreement;

(D) provide for the sharing of costs of implementing the agreement among the Federal Government, the landowner, and other entities, as mutually agreed on by the affected interests; and

(E) ensure that any expenditure by the Secretary pursuant to the agreement is determined by the Secretary to be in the public interest; and

(2) the Secretary may require such other terms and conditions as are necessary to protect the public investment on private lands, provided such terms and conditions are mutually agreed to by the Secretary and the landowner.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, at the beginning, I want to thank my friend from Washington, the chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. GORTON. He has been very helpful, both the chairman and his staff, in our preparation of this effort. I want him to know that I very much appreciate all his help. Senator BYRD is not here, but he, as well, has been very helpful to me. I want to thank both Senator GORTON and Senator BYRD at this time for their assistance.

As Senator GORTON knows, in particular, the natural resources questions in the West are especially polarized. They are ones where so often there are very heated and controversial fights between groups, particularly industry groups and environmental groups.

I and others, and I know the Senator from Washington is interested in this, are continually making efforts to look at new models, in effect, new paradigms, for resolving some of these natural resources questions and trying to bring people together. It is for this reason that I offer this amendment, Mr. President.

My sense is some of the most exciting work being done in our country, particularly in our Pacific Northwest, involves voluntary, purely private efforts, where people look to try to get beyond some of the old controversies, some of the old battles, and come together to resolve natural resources questions in a balanced way.

What our history in the Northwest has always been about is protecting our treasures, protecting our natural resources, while at the same time being sensitive to economics. It is my sense that some of the voluntary watershed restoration projects on private lands give us the chance to accelerate the effort, to find these new models for resolving natural resources questions. It is for that reason that I offer this amendment today.

This amendment would make it possible, Mr. President and colleagues, for willing private landowners to work on cooperative efforts with the Bureau of Land Management to restore damaged watersheds so they can provide habitat to salmon and other species. It is going to make more effective the Bureau of Land Management's watershed restoration efforts in a fashion that involves no extra costs to our taxpayers while at the same time protecting the private property rights of citizens in our country.

I got particularly interested in this issue, Mr. President, when I met with a watershed restoration group in Coos Bay on our south coast. They had been working with a number of the natural resources agencies, getting some funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to work on projects that involve private landowners. The group was also interested in working in a cooperative effort with the Bureau of Land Management but had been unable to do so.

This watershed restoration group, which involved environmental leaders, industry leaders, fishermen, a cross section of people, approached the Bureau of Land Management and were told by the Secretary that the Bureau of Land Management interprets its authority to work on projects involving private landowners as limited to what they describe as planning activities. The Bureau of Land Management said at that time to this group on the south coast in Oregon that they did not think they had the authority to actually go out and fund improvements on private lands.

It is my view that the Bureau of Land Management ought to have the clear authority to work with willing private landowners on cooperative watershed restoration efforts. In many cases, the only way to solve a watershed problem or restore species habitat is to target both public and private lands in the watershed. You cannot solve the problem if you focus just on the public lands.

This is the most biologically responsible approach to species management. It recognizes that many species frequently cross property lines, moving

from public to private property and back the other way. As a result, restoring habitat on private lands may in certain cases be the most effective investment for survival of species also found on Bureau of Land Management and other public lands.

For a moment, let me take an example where 90 percent of the land in the watershed is owned by the Bureau of Land Management but the source of the watershed problem is the 10 percent that is privately owned. In this case, the problem is most likely not going to be solved if the Bureau of Land Management can only spend money for improvements on the BLM land. The result will be that the watershed problem is either not going to be solved, or else the Bureau of Land Management is going to end up wasting money funding improvements only on the Bureau of Land Management lands.

There is a simple and straightforward solution: Give the Bureau of Land Management clear authority to work with willing private landowners on cooperative watershed restoration projects in cases where this will do the most good for the whole watershed. This way, the public's and the watershed's concerns—taxpayers', industries', and environmental concerns—all get addressed.

To be eligible for funding under this legislation, the project site on private land must be in the same watershed as the Bureau of Land Management lands. But the private land does not have to border directly with the Bureau of Land Management lands. The key consideration ought to be the biological and ecological connections between the private lands and the Bureau of Land Management lands.

Taking for a second what happens if salmon use both forks of a river in a single watershed, but only one of the forks contains public land, this legislation would allow the Bureau of Land Management to spend money on private land in the other fork where this would benefit the survival or recovery of the species as a whole in the watershed. The Bureau of Land Management would also be authorized to spend money on private lands where this would provide for immediate protection to the threatened or endangered species found on the public land or where spending the money on private land is more beneficial to the overall recovery of the species.

Now, at the same time, we do not want the Bureau of Land Management spending taxpayer money on projects that benefit only the private landowners. To ensure that this does not happen, the amendment requires there be a benefit to fish, wildlife, or other resources on public lands. The Secretary must also determine that the project is in the public interest in order for the Bureau of Land Management to purchase them.

Finally, Mr. President, my amendment provides important protections for private property owners participating in cooperative watershed res-

toration efforts. From start to finish, the process is completely voluntary. Under the amendment, the Bureau of Land Management can only enter into watershed restoration agreements that are mutually agreed to by the Secretary, as well as by the private landowner. If there is any part of the agreement that the private landowner objects to, that landowner can simply say no to the agreement.

What we have, Mr. President, is an amendment that, in my view, will be good for watershed restoration efforts. It will be good in terms of maximizing taxpayer funds during these tough times, and it fully protects the rights of private landowners. I hope this will be adopted.

I thank the Senator from Washington. Both he and his staff have been very helpful, as well as the Senator from West Virginia, Senator BYRD.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, this amendment proposed by the Senator from Oregon is, indeed, relevant to the subject matter of this bill. It is one, as he has already eloquently pointed out, that attempts to bring people together, people who have differing views often, and not only individuals with differing views but Government agencies, especially the Bureau of Land Management, and private landowners, in a way that benefits fish and wildlife, in a way that benefits the environment, and in a way which is entirely voluntary.

He has worked with me and my office on all of the details of this proposal. I am delighted to say from the point of view of this Senator and the managers of the bill, the proposal is not only acceptable, but one for which I have an enthusiastic response and full support.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I am informed that this amendment has been cleared by the manager on the other side of the aisle. Under those circumstances, from my perspective, it is ripe for a vote and for acceptance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 5352) was agreed to.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. WYDEN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, it is obvious that the Interior appropriations bill is open for amendment. We are open for business. We have now heard an amendment proposed by the Senator from South Dakota. We have accepted one by the Senator from Oregon.

For the information of Members, under the previous order, at 3 o'clock,

the Chair is to recognize the Senator from Arkansas to introduce an amendment on grazing fees, which, obviously, will be a very controversial amendment. I hope there will be a full and complete debate on that amendment this afternoon so that it is ready for a vote tomorrow. It will not, under the unanimous-consent agreement, come to a vote today, but we can move this bill forward and make progress on this bill by having a thorough debate on that issue, one that, while it is controversial, is certainly relevant to this appropriations bill.

In the meantime, the floor is open for any other Member who wishes to introduce an amendment to begin discussion, and perhaps conclude it if the amendment is not a controversial one. I invite other Members of the Senate who are within the sound of this debate to bring those amendments to the floor and we will deal with them as expeditiously and fairly as we possibly can.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may be allowed to speak for 4 or 5 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair and thank the floor manager, my good friend, the senior Senator from the State of Washington.

AMERICA'S DEPENDENCE ON MIDEAST OIL

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, my purpose in rising is to simply draw some attention to what is certainly evident to this Senator from Alaska; and that is, our increasing dependence on Mideast oil sources. As we have seen within the last few weeks, there has been a crisis as a consequence of the efforts of Saddam Hussein to once again provide the world with a reflection on how we have become more and more dependent on imported oil from the Mideast. We had United States cruise missile attacks against Iraq again, highlighting the crucial dependence that the United States has become accustomed to in its dependence on imported oil.

I think it is fair to say the administration's policy is one that is really absent. It is difficult to identify just what our policy is, as far as energy is concerned. Back in 1973 when the United States was approximately one-third dependent on imported oil, we entered into a national security analysis because we were concerned that that increasing dependence would lessen U.S.